

Portola Valley School
775 Portola Road
Portola Valley
San Mateo County
California

HABS No.

CA-1992

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41-PORVA,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

PORTOLA VALLEY SCHOOL

HABS No. CA-1992

Location: 775 Portola Road, Portola Valley, San Mateo County, California.

Present Owner: Portola Valley School District, 765 Portola Road, Portola Valley, California.

Present Use: Teachers' lounge and storage room.

Significance: The Portola Valley schoolhouse is one of the few remaining turn-of-the-century examples of Mission Revival-styled schools. Its wood construction and use of shingles present a unique expression of this popular style.

PART 1. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1909.
2. Architect: LeBaron R. Olive, a Certified Architect (licensed by the State) with an office at Palo Alto, was engaged to make the drawings and to superintend the school's construction.
3. Builder, contractor, supplier: On October 4, 1909, the school trustees awarded a building contract for \$2,347 to Olaf Olsen and Jerome H. LaCroix of Mayfield (South Palo Alto).
4. Original plans, construction: Complete original architectural plans and the construction contract are in the possession of Mrs. Dorothy Regnery, Portola Valley.
5. Alterations and additions: The schoolhouse has changed very little since it was built. Originally the exterior was painted a cream color with tile-red trim, probably to simulate the characteristic Mission Revival stucco with tile. In the 1950s the color scheme was reversed to its present appearance. An oil-burning furnace was added in a shed-roof extension (ca. 1935-40) at the back of the school and the building was wired for electricity. A composition roof was substituted for cedar roof shingles. Much of the original copper-finish bronze hardware remains throughout the building.

In 1952 an interior partition created two kindergarten classrooms out of the initial single space. A window on each side was converted to an exit to conform with fire codes. During the 1960s the building was carpeted and used as an office by the District Superintendent. The front room is currently used as a teachers' lounge and the back room for storage.

6. Historical events and personages: After a half century's existence, the Searsville School District's attendance reached a peak in 1909. The census listed 76 children eligible to attend, even though only 53 enrolled. The same year the name was changed to Portola School District.

Portola taxpayers were affluent San Franciscans who owned large estates in the valley. Many of these homes were designed in the Mission Revival Style, popular on the San Francisco Peninsula at the turn of the century.

In June 1974, the Portola Valley School was placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

Wood frame, 30'-4" (three-bay front) x 50'-4, one story, hipped roof with three curvilinear gables, round-arched front windows and doorway, recessed central entrance flanking columns.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary and unpublished sources:

Deed books in the San Mateo County Recorder's Office, Hall of Records, Redwood City, California.

Old views in the Collection of Dorothy Regnery, Portola Valley, California.

B. Secondary sources:

Books: Kirker, Harold, California Architectural Frontier, (N.Y.: Russell and Russell, 1970), pp. 120-126.

Olmsted, Roger, et al, Here Today, (San Francisco; Chronicle Books, 1968), p. 312.

Whiffen, Marcus, American Architecture Since 1780, (Cambridge; MIT Press, 1969), pp. 213-216.

Interview: Mrs. Dorothy Regnery, Portola Valley, California, 8-8-1974.

Prepared by: R. Patrick Christopher
Architectural Historian
Historic American Buildings Survey
August 1974

Special assistance by: Mrs. Dorothy Regnery
Portola Valley, California

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was sponsored jointly by the National Park Service and the Junior League of Palo Alto. Recorded under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1974 at the Historic American Buildings Survey field office at the Latham-Hopkins Gatehouse, Menlo Park, California. Project supervisor was Kim Spurgeon (Assistant Professor of Architecture, Kansas State University); the project historian was R. Patrick Christopher (Columbia University); and the student architects were Stephen Farneth (Carnegie Mellon University), Robert Randall (University of Houston), Aino Vieira da Rosa (University of Oregon), and Amy Weinstein (University of Pennsylvania). The written data were edited by Dorothy F. Regnery in San Mateo County in 1975 and by Alison K. Hoagland, HABS Historian, in February 1983.